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## **LOBBYIST PLEADS GUILTY TO DESTROYING EVIDENCE IN PUBLIC CORRUPTION INVESTIGATION**

WASHINGTON - A partner in a Pennsylvania-based lobbying firm pleaded guilty today to destruction of evidence, Acting Assistant Attorney General Matthew Friedrich of the Criminal Division, U.S. Attorney Jeffrey A. Taylor for the District of Columbia, Assistant Director of the FBI's Washington Field Office Joseph Persichini Jr., and Special Agent in Charge C. André Martin of Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Criminal Investigation announced.

Cecelia Grimes, 43, of Parkesburg, Penn., pleaded guilty before U.S. District Court Judge Henry H. Kennedy Jr., in U.S. District Court of the District of Columbia. At sentencing, Grimes faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000.

According to the evidence presented at the plea hearing, Grimes was a registered lobbyist whose firm submitted requests for appropriations to the office of a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives (Representative A). Beginning prior to October 2006, the FBI opened an investigation into certain activities of Representative A, including whether Representative A agreed to support appropriations requests made by Grimes's firm in return for the payment of fees to Grimes's firm by its clients.

As part of that investigation, on Oct. 16, 2006, FBI agents served Grimes with two grand jury subpoenas after questioning her in relation to the investigation. One subpoena was for her lobbying firm's custodian of records and the other was for the custodian of records of another lobbying firm of which Grimes was the sole proprietor. Both subpoenas were issued on behalf of a grand jury of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. The subpoenas instructed the custodians of records to produce by Oct. 27, 2006, a series of records, including all documents relating to: several of Firm A's clients; Representative A; Representative A's campaigns; or Grimes's travel.

Evidence presented at the plea hearing revealed that within six days of the FBI's service of the two grand-jury subpoenas, Grimes placed some documents that she had stored in her house into trash bags, which she then brought to the front of her house for collection as garbage. These documents included items related to Grimes's travel and to Representative A's campaigns. FBI agents retrieved the garbage bags that contained the discarded documents, which were never produced to law enforcement authorities.

Evidence also presented at the plea hearing revealed Grimes also destroyed e-mails that were stored on her BlackBerry device. In early November 2006, Grimes placed her BlackBerry device in a trash can near a restaurant in Southeastern Pennsylvania. Grimes discarded her BlackBerry for the purpose of keeping the FBI from reviewing certain emails of her's that would be of interest to the FBI.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Howard Sklamberg, Trial Attorney Gregory C.J. Lisa of the Criminal Division's Organized Crime and Racketeering Section, Trial Attorney Armando O. Bonilla and former Trial Attorney Natasha Tidwell of the Criminal Division's Public Integrity Section. The case is being investigated by the FBI and IRS Criminal Investigation. The investigation of this case is ongoing.

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